



Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights

Comprehensive Sex-Ed Resource

Assertive Communication Activity

Grade Level: 1+

This activity is from **BEYOND THE BASICS**, a resource for educators on sexuality and sexual health.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discern between aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication styles.
- 2 Develop assertive communication skills.

Learn more about *Beyond the Basics* at www.actioncanadashr.org/beyond
For more activities like this one, go to www.actioncanadashr.org/sex-ed-activities

Ensure that students know this game is pretend and that one of the guidelines is that students cannot leave the circle with another student's toy.

1. Ahead of this lesson, ask students to bring a favourite toy for show and tell. Exceptions to the show and tell would be a device that can send and receive digital data/communications.
2. Divide students up into Team A and Team B.
3. Ask Team A to stand in a circle with their toys and take a moment to think about why it is their favourite toy.
4. ✚ Optional: Have students share reasons with the entire class.
5. After you have given Team A a moment to reflect, ask them to put their toys on the ground, step outside of the circle and sit down.
6. Ask Team B to take one of the toys in the circle and to sit back down.
7. Ask Team A what they felt when a member from Team B took their toy away. Prompt for annoyed, jealous, neutral, sad, angry, and frustrated.

8. Ask students what they understand by the term communication.

Educator Answer Key

Communication is an exchange of thoughts, ideas, and feelings; it is the sending and receiving of messages and meaning.

9. Ask what can get in the way of communication.

Educator Answer Key

Some examples include not being clear, not listening, self-interest, no common language, feeling like you need to "win."

10. Explain that there are four basic types of communication styles: passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive.
 - Passive response: You are annoyed but you do not say anything.
 - Aggressive response: You yell at them.
 - Passive-aggressive response: You curse them under your breath and gossip about them with your friends.
 - Assertive response: You respectfully and clearly stand up for yourself, say how their action of taking the toy made you feel and what action you want to see taken to correct the mistake. "Maybe you did not realize it but that is my toy and when you are done looking at it, I would like it back because I felt sad when you took it without asking."
11. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each kind of communication. Table 7F, on page 4, provides examples.
12. Write the following assertive response formula on the board: When X happens, I feel X, and I would like X to happen.
13. Ask each student from Team A to find the individual from Team B who has their toy. Ask Team A students to use the assertive response formula to communicate how they feel about Team B taking their toy.

14. Switch team roles so that Team A takes the toys of Team B.
15. ✚ Optional: As a class, work through the following hypothetical examples to further demonstrate assertive communication:
 - Your sibling opens the door and comes into your room without knocking.

Educator Answer Key

When you come in like that without knocking, I feel really annoyed and I get so mad at you. I'd like you to knock, like we agreed, so that I can talk to you nicely.

Background Information for Educators

There are few communication role models in the media, in our public institutions, and in many families. Communication is more than words: it is about tone, body language, what is said and unsaid. Learning how to communicate effectively is a learned skill that many adults are still working on. It is often honed through trial and error throughout a person's life. Effective communication requires continual practise. Effective communication is a skill that is foundational for all aspects of life: social, emotional, romantic, sexual, and professional.

Relationships (including friendships) that are healthy and intimate are fostered by clear, kind, and firm communication, sometimes referred to as assertive communication. Assertive communication can help people navigate all types of relationships. Assertive communication is considerate though not passive, confident though not aggressive. A person who communicates assertively listens and values their needs as well as those of the people around them. They are able to directly and clearly state their feelings, needs, and opinions without encroaching on the rights of others.

You Should Know

Assertive communication comes from an individualist framework, which assumes that every person represents only themselves and values directness and disclosure. While this may not match with all cultural values, assertive communication can still be used as a tool. It does not require specific values.

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive- Aggressive	Assertive
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids confrontation • Seems generous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Releases tension • Seems powerful • Feels like you “win” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Releases some tension • Seems nice on the surface • Avoids confrontation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes responsibility for yourself and your needs (self-care) • Is open and honest • Gets some of your needs met • Maintains good relationships • Leads to increased self-confidence • Leads to increased connection • Reduces anxiety • Minimizes possible hurt to others and yourself

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive- Aggressive	Assertive
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not feel heard • Feels resentful and taken advantage of • Does not solve the problem • Represses feelings and increases stress build-up that can lead to an emotional outburst • Leads to a loss of confidence (feeling unheard) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not solve problem • Creates conflicts and enemies • Seems rude and abusive • Results in paranoia and long term fear • Leads to guilt and shame • Leads to negative relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems “two faced” • Leads to distrust • Feels powerless • Creates resentment • Seems manipulative • Seems challenging to be honest • Feels like lying • Leads to loss of confidence (feeling unheard or not trusted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires work and practise • Feels scary to use at first • Lacks good role models

BEYOND THE BASICS

A Resource for Educators on Sexuality and Sexual Health



Beyond the Basics is a resource for educators on sexuality and sexual health. It offers the tools to teach young people about sexuality and sexual health from a sex positive, equity, and human rights perspective. It covers anatomy, consent, healthy relationships, and more! Choose from a wide range of chapters, modules, and activities that fit the different age, grade, and curricular goals for your students.

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